

How is Students' Attitude Towards Learning English? A Case Study at the Second Graders of SMP Islam Al-Falah Jambi

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Abstract

This study investigates students' attitudes and perceptions toward learning English at SMP Islam Al-Falah Kota Jambi. Attitude plays a crucial role in language acquisition, influencing students' engagement, motivation, and overall learning outcomes. The study examines three key aspects of students' attitudes: behavioral, cognitive, and affective. Using a qualitative research approach with Yin's case study method, data were collected through questionnaires and interviews with second-grade students. Findings reveal that students generally hold a positive cognitive attitude toward learning English, recognizing its importance for future careers and global communication. Behaviorally, students demonstrate responsibility in completing tasks but show varying levels of motivation for independent learning. The affective aspect highlights enthusiasm for English learning but also identifies challenges related to speaking confidence and anxiety. The study suggests that fostering a supportive learning environment, integrating interactive methods, and encouraging speaking practice can enhance students' attitudes and learning outcomes. This study elucidates the subtle aspects related to students' attitudes, so enhancing English language education through the provision of contextually pertinent teaching methodologies and fostering the advancement of more effective learner-centered strategies. Future research should explore motivational factors, teaching strategies, and the impact of digital resources on language learning.

Keywords: Case study, learning English, students' attitudes

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DOI: 10.35961/salee.v6i2.2000**1. Introduction**

Learning English, particularly as a foreign language, is complex and dynamic. It entails developing abilities in reading, writing, listening, and speaking. To grow familiar with vocabulary and grammar, students must practice and be exposed on a regular basis. The process might be difficult, particularly with pronunciation and cultural differences. Real-life contacts and media immersion help students build practical communication skills. Patience and repetition are essential for making steady growth. Finally, learning English is a process that becomes easier with devotion and consistent work.

To support the goal in learning English, students must have positive attitudes toward it. Peteros, et. al (2019) states that academic performance is significantly influenced by students' attitudes about the subject. Therefore, it has a significant impact on the learning process, particularly in language acquisition. Positive attitudes, such as curiosity and resilience, encourage students to participate more actively, take chances, and seek out opportunities for practice, so accelerating learning. Students who believe they can succeed are more likely to persevere and remain motivated. In contrast, negative attitudes, such as fear of failure or a lack of interest, can lead to avoidance, limiting exposure to the language and reducing progress. A supportive environment that promotes a positive attitude can assist pupils in overcoming challenges, increasing confidence, and improving learning results.

Attitudes play a crucial role in language acquisition by influencing students' motivation, engagement, and learning strategies. Learners with positive attitudes are typically more motivated—whether through personal interest (integrative motivation) or practical goals (instrumental motivation), as described in Gardner's Socio-Educational Model (2019). They tend to be more engaged, willing to take risks, and adopt effective strategies such as planning, seeking help, and managing learning emotions. In contrast, negative attitudes can lead to anxiety and classroom passivity, limiting language input and practice. Krashen's Affective Filter Hypothesis explains how such emotional barriers block language acquisition, while Dörnyei's L2 Motivational Self System (2009) highlights the importance of having a clear vision of one's ideal self as an English speaker. When students lack this vision, their motivation and participation may decrease. Therefore, understanding and addressing students' attitudes through supportive environments and relevant teaching strategies is essential for improving their confidence, independence, and overall language learning outcomes.

When students have positive attitudes in learning English, they will have some perceptions as feedbacks. Students' perceptions of learning English might vary greatly depending on their personal goals, previous experiences, and cultural background. Some people see English as a valuable tool for advancing their careers and adventuring, which motivates them to learn it

enthusiastically. Others may find it difficult or daunting, particularly if they struggle with pronunciation or complicated grammar rules. Students' perception can also be influenced by how English is taught—engaging, interactive classrooms frequently generate good perceptions, whereas rigorous or overly focused-on-grammar approaches can be frustrating. Finally, students who believe English is accessible and relevant to their life are more inclined to approach learning it positively.

In Grade VIII students of SMP Islam Al Falah Jambi, students' achievement for English subject was not maximum. Their grade was not significant. When conducting preliminary observation by having English mini talk to randomize grade 8 students, they seemed they were scared to make mistake and try to avoid the conversation. Even they wanted to response, some of them had trouble in pronouncing sentences. Then by having observation, they tended to be passive in classroom, and only do and act what their teacher instruct. By having these cases, it could be concluded that they did not really have a good attitude in learning English. Based on those problems found, it is better to know deeper how is students' attitude toward learning English.

1.1. Theoretical framework

1.1.1. Attitude

Attitude is a psychological term that describes how we feel, think, and act towards specific individuals, things, ideas, or events. As in line with Cherry (2024), attitude refers to a combination of feelings, beliefs, and behaviours toward a certain item, person, thing, or event. Attitude may also be characterized as the way we evaluate something or someone. Kruy (2023) adds that attitude is a summary evaluation; they are not constantly objective, belief-based conclusions. The evaluation includes analysis as well as "hot" emotional responses. These emotional responses can shape attitudes even when logical reasoning suggests a different perspective. As a result, attitudes may vary based on personal experiences, social influences, and cultural background. Attitude is also linked to an individual's views and values. Its view and values could be in positive and negative. Positive attitudes frequently lead to helpful behaviors, whilst negative attitudes might result in avoidance or resistance. For example, if you enjoy exercising, you are more likely to do so on a regular basis. In other words, attitudes are important psychological constructs that shape how people perceive, respond to, and interact with their surroundings. They influence our behavior, decision-making, and social interactions.

Attitudes play a crucial role in education, influencing students' learning outcomes, engagement, and academic progress. Attitudes in education are as important as cognitive and skill domains in determining affective outcomes (Smith, 2020). Attitudes have a significant impact on learning. Jones (2021) states that a positive attitude towards a subject promotes comprehension and engagement, whereas a negative attitude might hinder learning. Sometimes teachers notice students' attitudes to see students' academic progress. Stand in

line with Lee and Katherine (2019), they state that teachers use students' attitudes to assess their academic performance, engagement, and effectiveness in reaching course objectives. By observing students' attitudes, teachers can identify areas where additional support or encouragement is needed. A student's enthusiasm and willingness to participate often indicate a deeper understanding and interest in the subject. Conversely, a lack of engagement or a negative attitude may signal difficulties in comprehension or motivation.

Given the significant role of attitudes in education, students' attitudes toward learning English can greatly influence their comprehension, engagement, and overall academic performance in the subject. Attitudes become the main agent in accomplishing learning goals. Anwar & Climis (2017) found that a student's attitude towards the language is a personal variable that influences their learning of English. A student's attitude toward learning English is a unique, personal factor that shapes their learning experience. Positive attitudes towards language learning can lead to better outcomes, whereas negative attitudes can inhibit growth. As Zulfikar, Dahliana, and Sari (2019) define an attitude in language learning as the inclination to act positively or adversely towards various components of language acquisition. A positive attitude encourages motivation, confidence, and consistent effort, making language acquisition easier. Conversely, a negative attitude can lead to lack of interest, fear of failure, or avoidance of practice. To maintain students' attitude, teachers and learners can improve outcomes by fostering a supportive, enjoyable, and goal-oriented learning environment.

On the other hand, students' attitudes can evolve over time (Syieda, 2016). Kunwar (2023) also emphasized they are the consequence of the experiences; it is not the inherent characteristics and can be changed as the individual perceive the new situation and the environment. They may develop new perspectives as they gain more knowledge and experience. Students' attitudes shape their active participation in learning, influenced by teaching, curriculum, practices, and management planning (Khun-Inkeeree et. al, 2016). Exposure to different cultures and ideas can also influence their way of thinking. Additionally, interactions with peers and teachers can shape their attitudes over time. Therefore, education plays a crucial role in fostering adaptability and open-mindedness.

According to Syieda (2016) attitudes are made up of three aspects: cognitive, emotional (affective), and behavioural. In line with Eshghinejad (2016), these three attitude aspects are based on the three theoretical approaches of behaviourism, cognitivism, and affectivism, respectively.

1.1.1.1. Behavior aspect of students' attitude

The behavior aspect of an attitude refers to one's behavior and reactions in specific situations. It is reflected in students' actions, such as their participation in class, willingness to practice speaking, effort in completing assignments, and engagement in language-related activities.

These behaviors serve as observable indicators of students' underlying feelings and beliefs about learning. Positive behavioral attitudes often suggest motivation and interest, while negative behaviors may signal anxiety, low confidence, or disengagement.

Student behavior in the classroom is increasingly understood through the lens of contemporary motivational and engagement theories, particularly Self-Determination Theory (SDT) and Expectancy-Value Theory. SDT, developed by Deci and Ryan, emphasizes the importance of fulfilling students' basic psychological needs: autonomy, competence, and relatedness. When students feel they have control over their learning (autonomy), believe in their abilities (competence), and feel connected to teachers and peers (relatedness), they are more likely to demonstrate positive behaviors such as active participation, initiative to practice speaking English, and persistence, reflecting engagement that arises from internal motivation fostered by a supportive classroom environment (Deci & Ryan, 2000). Complementing this, Expectancy-Value Theory, developed by Eccles and Wigfield, explains student behavior through their expectations for success and the value they assign to tasks. When students hold high expectations of success and perceive tasks as meaningful or interesting, they tend to exhibit greater persistence, focus, and effort (Wigfield & Eccles, 2000). Disengagement may result not from lack of ability but from students doubting their success or failing to see task relevance. Thus, teachers can promote positive student behavior by nurturing autonomy, competence, and relatedness while simultaneously enhancing students' expectancy and task value through clear instructions, relevant content, and constructive feedback.

In addition, contemporary perspectives, such as Social Cognitive Theory (Bandura, 2001), emphasize that student behavior is shaped through reciprocal interactions between personal factors, behavioral patterns, and the environment. Students learn behavioral responses not only from direct experience but also by observing others, especially peers and teachers, and by anticipating the consequences of their actions. Furthermore, Self-Determination Theory (Deci & Ryan, 2000) adds that when students' needs for autonomy, competence, and relatedness are met, they are more likely to show positive behavioral attitudes—such as initiative, persistence, and meaningful participation. Likewise, Student Engagement Theory (Fredricks et al., 2004) views behavioral engagement as a key dimension of learning, closely tied to emotional and cognitive engagement. These suggest that fostering supportive, motivating, and interactive learning environments can significantly influence the behavioral expressions of students' attitudes in the classroom.

1.1.1.2. The cognitive aspect of students' attitude

Cognitive aspects of students' attitudes toward learning English involve how learners perceive, process, and internalize language-related information. Cognitive learning theory emphasizes the importance of mental processes in acquiring knowledge, asserting that learning occurs when students actively construct meaning based on prior experiences

(Schunk, 2020). Contemporary perspectives, such as constructivist theory (Piaget, 1970; Vygotsky, 1978) and cognitive load theory (Sweller, 2011), argue that learners are not passive recipients but active meaning-makers. For instance, in learning English vocabulary or grammar, students build connections between new input and existing cognitive structures. Additionally, cognitive load theory suggests that instructional design should consider the limitations of working memory to optimize language learning efficiency.

Belief systems also significantly influence students' cognitive engagement and attitudes in learning English. Dweck's (2006) mindset theory proposes that students with a growth mindset—believing that abilities can develop through effort—are more likely to persist through challenges, view mistakes as learning opportunities, and develop more positive attitudes toward learning. In contrast, those with a fixed mindset may avoid challenges and give up easily. Bandura's (1997) social cognitive theory highlights self-efficacy as a key factor in learning outcomes; students who believe in their capacity to succeed are more motivated, set higher goals, and show greater resilience in the face of language learning difficulties.

Furthermore, the expectancy-value theory developed by Eccles and Wigfield (2020) offers an updated framework for understanding the cognitive basis of motivation and attitude. This theory emphasizes that students' engagement in learning English is shaped by their expectancy for success and the value they attach to the task. If students believe they can succeed and view English as meaningful—whether for academic, social, or career-related reasons—they are more likely to develop a positive attitude and put forth sustained effort. Therefore, enhancing metacognitive awareness, encouraging growth-oriented beliefs, and designing instruction that connects language use with students' real-life goals can significantly improve their cognitive and emotional investment in English learning.

1.1.1.3. The affective aspect of students' attitude

The affective aspect of student attitude refers to the emotional responses, feelings, and values that learners associate with the process of learning English. These emotional factors—such as enjoyment, anxiety, interest, and motivation—strongly influence how students engage with the language and persist through challenges. According to Krashen's Affective Filter Hypothesis (1982), emotional variables can either support or hinder language acquisition. A low affective filter—associated with low anxiety, high motivation, and positive attitudes—facilitates language input processing. Conversely, students with high anxiety or negative attitudes may block language input, resulting in limited progress regardless of cognitive ability or instructional quality.

Recent theories expand the affective domain by integrating socio-emotional dynamics into language learning. Positive Psychology in SLA (Second Language Acquisition), particularly the work of Dewaele and MacIntyre (2016), emphasizes the role of positive emotions—such

as enjoyment, pride, and interest—in fostering long-term engagement and resilience in language learning. Their research highlights that Foreign Language Enjoyment (FLE) can significantly predict willingness to communicate, participation, and overall language performance. Emotional experiences are not merely byproducts of instruction but central to the learning process, shaping students' identity, motivation, and classroom interaction.

Furthermore, Emotion Regulation Theory (Gross, 2015) is gaining attention in educational contexts, emphasizing how students manage their emotional responses during learning. In language classrooms, students frequently encounter situations that evoke discomfort—such as public speaking, fear of making mistakes, or social comparison. The ability to regulate these emotions through strategies like cognitive reappraisal, self-talk, or seeking peer support can determine whether students persist or withdraw. Teachers play a vital role in modeling and scaffolding healthy emotional regulation, creating emotionally safe environments where learners can take risks and grow in confidence.

Lastly, the Control-Value Theory of Achievement Emotions by Pekrun (2006, 2021) offers a comprehensive framework for understanding how emotions develop in educational settings. The theory posits that students' emotions are influenced by two key appraisals: their sense of control over learning outcomes and the value they assign to the task. When students feel capable of influencing their performance and view English learning as important or enjoyable, they are more likely to experience positive emotions such as enjoyment or pride. In contrast, feelings of helplessness and low task value can lead to boredom, anxiety, or frustration. Educators who design emotionally supportive classrooms, promote task relevance, and foster student autonomy can significantly improve students' affective attitudes toward English learning.

It could be concluded that the affective aspect of students' attitudes in learning English involves emotions that influence motivation, participation, and persistence. Positive emotions like enjoyment and confidence can enhance language learning, while anxiety or boredom can hinder progress. Theories such as Krashen's Affective Filter, Positive Psychology in SLA, Emotion Regulation, and Control-Value Theory highlight the importance of emotional support in the classroom. By fostering positive emotional experiences and helping students manage their feelings, teachers can improve both engagement and achievement in English learning.

2. Method

The research method used was qualitative research with Yin (2018) case study approach. According to Yin (2018), the case study method is appropriate when the research question seeks to explore “how” or “why” a phenomenon occurs, particularly when the phenomenon is contemporary, cannot be manipulated, and requires an in-depth investigation within its real-life context.

This case study was conducted at the second-grade students of SMP Islam Al-Falah Kota Jambi, Indonesia. The population was 137 students grouped into 5 classes (VIII.1 – VIII.5). The sampling method of this research was the cluster random sampling in which group, not individual, was randomly selected. The instrument of the research was questionnaire. The questionnaire was incorporated and adapted Harahap's (2015) instrument, which includes 24 items across three attitudes; behavior (6 statements), cognitive (11 statements) and affective (7 statements).

3. Findings and Discussion

3.1. Findings

3.1.1. The behavioral aspects of students' attitudes towards learning English

In behavioral aspects there were six statements included on the questionnaire. It was related to on how students' reaction to various situations when they were learning English. The data as follows:

Table 1. The behavioral aspects of students' attitudes towards learning English (%)

No.	Statements	SA	A	N	D	SD
1.	I took notes to better grasp the content delivered by the teacher.	45.5	54.5	0	0	0
2.	I always complete and submit my projects on time.	40.9	54.5	4.5	0	0
3.	I've never cheated on an English exam.	27.3	54.5	9.1	0	0
4.	Reading English books, dictionaries, periodicals, and newspapers will help me expand my vocabulary.	27.3	40.9	22.7	9.1	0
5.	I constantly consult with my English instructor whenever I have any issues or difficulties with the language.	31.8	40.9	27.3	4.5	0
6.	I attend English classes outside of school to enhance my abilities.	22.7	27.3	18.2	27.3	9.1

Based on data above, it could be seen some facts related on behavioral aspects of students' attitudes towards learning English on 2nd grade students of SMP Islam AL-Falah Kota Jambi. On the first statement, majority of students strongly agree or agree, showing a positive behavior toward active engagement in learning. Then on second statement, nearly all students either strongly agree or agree, reflecting strong responsibility and time management. Next statement, the majority indicate integrity in their academic behavior, though a small portion remains neutral. While many agree on the fourth statement, a notable percentage remain neutral or disagree, indicating varying levels of motivation toward independent learning. After that, on the fifth statement, many students agree, but the neutral and low levels of disagreement suggest some hesitancy or inconsistency in seeking help. And on last statement, responses are more varied, with fewer students strongly agreeing and a higher proportion disagreeing, indicating that external class attendance is not as widely practiced.

The findings reveal that the 2nd-grade students at SMP Islam AL-Falah Kota Jambi generally show positive attitudes toward learning English, particularly in their active engagement, responsibility, and academic integrity. Most students are enthusiastic participants and manage their learning time well, indicating a solid foundation for effective language learning. However, responses related to independent learning and help-seeking behaviors suggest that some students lack confidence or initiative, highlighting the need for more personalized support and a classroom environment that encourages asking for help. Additionally, the limited participation in external English learning activities points to a reliance on school-based instruction, emphasizing the importance of enhancing internal programs with supplementary resources such as English clubs, peer tutoring, or online tools. These insights suggest that while students are motivated and responsible, further efforts are needed to support their autonomy and broaden their learning opportunities.

3.1.2. The cognitive aspects of students' attitudes towards learning English

The questionnaire had eleven statements about cognitive aspect. Students' conviction in their ability to obtain knowledge and their sympathetic attitude towards the learning process are included in this component. The data are as follows:

Table 2. The cognitive aspects of students' attitudes towards learning English

No.	Statements	SA	A	N	D	SD
1.	English classes don't keep me from completing other lessons.	40.9	50	9.1	4.5	0
2.	I learnt English to be intelligent.	54.5	36.4	13.6	0	0
3.	English is crucial for the future as it is a globally recognized language.	54.5	50	4.5	0	0
4.	Learning English can help you acquire a job.	50	54.5	4.5	0	0
5.	I struggle to summarize key elements from English lessons on my own.	0	27.3	50	13.6	9
6.	English lectures are quite tough to grasp.	4.5	4.5	36.4	27.3	27.3
7.	I am unable to read anything in English.	0	9.1	18.2	54.5	18.2
8.	English courses are crucial as I aspire to go to countries where English is widely spoken.	54.5	40.9	9.1	0	0
9.	Good English skills can benefit other fields of study.	22.7	50	31.8	0	0
10.	When learning English, I gained a great deal of information.	31.8	40.9	27.3	4.5	0
11.	English lessons are not as challenging as other topics.	27.3	40.9	18.2	13.6	4.5

By the eleven statements of questionnaire, there were the data highlights a predominantly positive cognitive attitude toward learning English. It starts from English does not disturb other subjects. Then for students, English is not hard to learn so that they are able in activating their skill such as reading. Most students also see it as essential for career, global communication, and intellectual growth. However, areas such as summarization skills and

cross-disciplinary benefits may require further focus to enhance students' cognitive engagement with the language.

The findings suggest that students at SMP Islam AL-Falah Kota Jambi generally possess a positive cognitive attitude toward learning English, viewing it as a manageable subject that does not interfere with other academic areas and recognizing its importance for career prospects, global communication, and intellectual growth. This mindset reflects a strong mental readiness and motivation to engage with the language, particularly in skill areas like reading. However, the results also indicate that certain cognitive aspects, such as summarization skills and the ability to connect English learning with other subjects, may still be underdeveloped. This highlights the need for teachers to incorporate more cognitively demanding activities—such as summarizing, analyzing, and applying English across disciplines—to further enhance students' deeper understanding and cognitive engagement with the language.

3.1.3. The affective aspects of students' attitudes towards learning English

The questionnaire had seven statements on affective elements. It refers to the emotional and subjective aspects of a student's mindset. The data are as follows:

Table 3. The affective aspects of students' attitudes towards learning English

No.	Statements	SA	A	N	D	SD
1.	I like and never tire of learning English in class.	31.8	63.6	9.1	0	0
2.	I adore practicing English and don't mind making mistakes.	36.4	36.4	31.8	4.5	0
3.	I prefer to speak in English.	13.6	36.4	36.4	9.1	4.5
4.	Learning English motivates me to learn.	27.3	50	18.2	0	4.5
5.	When I speak in English, I feel anxious.	9.1	18.2	36.4	36.4	4.5
6.	I learned English to boost my self-confidence.	27.3	50	27.3	0	0
7.	I am not confident in my ability to speak English.	0	22.7	36.4	36.4	9.1

Based on the data above, it could be simplified some facts. First, the majority of students agree or strongly agree, reflecting a strong emotional engagement and enthusiasm for learning English in class. Then, most students give positive respond about practicing English and show resilience in handling mistakes, though a smaller percentage remain neutral or hesitant. On next interesting point, some students prefer speaking English, a significant portion is neutral or disagrees, indicating varying comfort levels with using the language verbally. Also, most students feel motivated to learn, showcasing the emotional drive that English provides, though a small minority disagrees. And there is a significant portion of disagrees, indicating confidence when speaking English, though some students still experience anxiety or remain neutral. While the majority agree that English learning contributes positively to students' self-esteem and confidence. Many students disagree or

strongly disagree, showing that most are reasonably confident in their speaking abilities, though a smaller portion remains neutral or uncertain.

The findings highlight that students at SMP Islam AL-Falah Kota Jambi generally display a strong emotional engagement and positive attitude toward learning English, with many expressing enthusiasm and motivation in classroom activities. Most students respond positively to practicing English and show emotional resilience when facing mistakes, suggesting a supportive learning environment that encourages growth. However, the mixed responses regarding speaking English indicate varying comfort levels, with some students still feeling anxious or hesitant. While a majority feel that learning English enhances their self-esteem and confidence, the presence of neutral or disagreeing responses suggests that emotional readiness and confidence, particularly in speaking, are areas that still require support. These findings imply that while emotional attitudes are mostly positive, teachers should focus more on building students' speaking confidence through low-pressure speaking opportunities, positive reinforcement, and activities that reduce anxiety to ensure all learners feel emotionally secure and motivated in using English.

3.2. Discussion

By having some data above, there are many aspects that could be drawn. The first is the answer of this study on how students' attitudes toward learning English. And it was found that in the Second Grade Students of SMP Islam Al-Falah Kota Jambi had a positive attitude in learning English.

This study explored the attitudes of second-grade students at SMP Islam Al-Falah Kota Jambi toward learning English through the lens of the tripartite model of attitude, which includes cognitive, behavioral, and affective components (Crano & Prislin, 2011; Albarracín, Johnson, & Zanna, 2019). The findings reveal that the cognitive aspect garnered the highest positive responses among the three, with 54.5% of students agreeing or strongly agreeing with statements such as, "I learn English to be intelligent," "English is crucial for the future as it is a globally recognized language," and "English courses are crucial as I aspire to go to countries where English is widely spoken." This reflects students' strong awareness of the instrumental value of English, supporting current understandings of language attitudes in applied linguistics, where pragmatic motivations such as global mobility and economic opportunity shape positive language dispositions (Ushioda, 2021). Additionally, accessibility to English learning materials, especially through digital platforms and social media, reinforces their perception of English as an achievable and beneficial subject, consistent with recent research highlighting the role of online affordances in fostering learner autonomy and digital literacies (Reinders & White, 2016).

The behavioral component of students' attitudes was also generally positive. Most students reported actively engaging in classroom activities such as taking notes, reading

English books, and submitting projects on time, indicating responsible and organized learning behaviors. Furthermore, the majority reported not cheating during exams, showing a strong sense of academic integrity. However, engagement in independent and external English learning varied: while 50% attended additional English classes, around 36.4% did not, with potential barriers including time, interest, or accessibility. This aligns with studies by Lai (2018) and Lamb and Arisandy (2019), suggesting that although formal engagement may be high, self-directed learning depends on learners' digital competence, self-regulation, and identity alignment with English learning. Interventions such as goal-setting workshops, autonomy-supportive teaching, and community-based extracurricular English programs could help address these disparities.

The affective aspect, concerning students' emotions and motivation, showed generally favorable attitudes, with 95.4% enjoying English classes and 77.3% feeling that learning English boosts their confidence. These findings support Popa and Salanta (2013), who emphasize the impact of emotional experiences on sustaining motivation. However, speaking-related challenges persisted: only 50% preferred speaking English, and 27.3% experienced speaking anxiety. Confidence levels were uneven, with 45.5% feeling confident, 22.7% not confident, and 36.4% neutral. These findings correspond to recent developments in language anxiety literature (Teimouri, Plonsky, & Goetze, 2019), which show that speaking continues to be a key source of anxiety in L2 contexts. To address this, teachers should incorporate low-stakes speaking activities such as pair work, role-plays, and peer-led discussions to create a low-anxiety environment. Integrating affective strategies such as mindfulness, reflective journaling, and emotional scaffolding may further enhance learners' affective experiences.

Interestingly, the findings also reveal a paradox: students who showed positive attitudes and achieved medium to high academic performance were often passive in class. This challenges traditional assumptions that associate overt participation with effective learning and aligns with recent perspectives on silent engagement and cognitive presence in language classrooms (King, 2013; Wei & Cao, 2024). Some students may engage through observation and silent processing, suggesting that educators need to adopt a broader understanding of participation that includes quiet yet reflective learners. This supports inclusive pedagogy models that value diverse engagement styles and invites more nuanced measures of classroom interaction and engagement.

3.2.1. Implications and recommendations

These findings inform the development of targeted strategies to further foster positive attitudes and address specific challenges. One key implication is the need for confidence-building programs, such as peer tutoring or speech clubs, to support students who experience speaking anxiety. These initiatives can offer safe, structured environments for practice and encouragement, reducing fear and increasing self-assurance in speaking English.

Secondly, promoting enhanced learner autonomy is essential. Integrating blended learning modules and encouraging goal-setting and self-reflection can empower students to take greater ownership of their learning journeys. Such strategies help students develop self-regulatory skills and a sense of responsibility.

Creating emotionally supportive classroom environments is another recommendation. Teachers should use scaffolding techniques that recognize and validate silent engagement, ensuring that all students, including quiet yet cognitively active learners, feel seen and included. This inclusive approach nurtures diverse learner voices and participation styles.

Finally, fostering parental and community involvement can play a vital role, especially in supporting students who may lack access to external learning opportunities. Community-based English programs or family-oriented language events could supplement formal education and broaden students' exposure to English outside the classroom.

3.2.2. Theoretical connections and contributions

This study aligns with contemporary frameworks of second language motivation and attitude, such as the L2 Motivational Self System (Dörnyei & Ushioda, 2021), which highlights the interplay between learners' vision of their future selves and their current engagement. It also contributes to a growing body of research on affective and behavioral dimensions of language learning (Oxford, 2017). Notably, the findings challenge simplistic applications of communicative language teaching (CLT), showing that meaningful engagement can occur without overt participation. This support calls for more flexible and inclusive pedagogy that recognizes cognitive and affective diversity among learners.

3.2.3. Limitations and future research directions

Despite its insights, the study has several limitations. First, the sample size is limited to one grade level at a single school, which may not reflect broader trends. Second, the reliance on self-reported questionnaires introduces potential biases such as social desirability effects. Third, contextual variables like gender, socioeconomic status, prior exposure to English, and teacher style were not controlled. Future research should include larger and more diverse samples, triangulate data sources (e.g., classroom observations, interviews), and explore longitudinal changes in attitude. Additionally, future studies could investigate how specific pedagogical interventions—especially those targeting affective and behavioral components—influence student engagement and confidence over time.

In conclusion, students at SMP Islam Al-Falah demonstrate overall positive attitudes toward learning English, particularly in cognitive engagement. By addressing emotional and behavioral challenges—especially in speaking confidence—educators can create more inclusive, motivating, and supportive environments that foster sustainable language development.

4. Conclusion

Based on the survey data, students generally have a positive attitude toward learning English. Most actively engage in learning by taking notes and submitting projects on time, and recognize the value of English for career opportunities, global communication, and personal development. However, challenges remain in speaking confidence, anxiety, and access to external learning support.

This study contributes to the field of English language education and applied linguistics by offering a nuanced analysis of students' attitudes through the tripartite framework—cognitive, behavioral, and affective. It reveals that while students at SMP Islam Al-Falah exhibit strong cognitive engagement and a clear recognition of the value of English, challenges persist in emotional and behavioral domains, particularly regarding speaking confidence and independent learning. These insights underscore that positive attitudes do not always translate into overt classroom participation, supporting more inclusive understandings of engagement.

Practically, the findings highlight the need for targeted interventions, such as peer support programs, autonomy-promoting strategies, and emotionally responsive teaching, to nurture diverse learner needs. For teachers, the study encourages adopting flexible pedagogical approaches that accommodate silent and reflective learners. For students, it underscores the importance of confidence-building and active participation, both inside and outside the classroom, to enhance their English learning journeys.

A suggestion for future research on this topic would be to include various educational contexts (e.g., elementary school, senior high school, and universities), as this study's confined scope limits generalizability. Additionally, the concept of attitude—especially negative attitudes—can be examined in conjunction with factors such as motivation, learning styles, learning strategies, and demographic differences like gender and grade level. Ultimately, since this study is limited to second graders at SMP Islam Al-Falah, it offers only a partial view of students' perspectives on learning English.

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